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SUBJECT: LRA: UN Plans Regional Assistance, Talks Stall on ICC

Ref: Khartoum 02161

¶1. As members of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) move in greater numbers to their two rally points, the UN has begun planning for increased humanitarian aid in these areas. Due to instability caused by the LRA, there has been little assistance in the region surrounding Ri-Kwangba outside of Nbanga in Western Equatoria and Owiny-ki-Bul outside of Parajok in Eastern Equatoria. The UN wants to use the calm surrounding the cessation of hostilities to begin services to these neglected areas, and to help allay the residents' fears regarding their new neighbors.

¶2. The UN is also hoping it will be able to separate the vulnerables and non-combatants from the LRA force once it assembles, although LRA leader Joseph Kony has indicated this is unlikely. There are currently reports of nearly 400 LRA members approaching Owiny-ki-Bul, and fighters have already started to assemble in Ri-Kwangba. The UN expects a total of 1500 LRA members to go to Owiny-ki-bul, and another 500 to travel to Ri-Kwangba.

¶3. Meanwhile, talks have stalled over a demand by LRA commander Vincent Otti to address immediately the issue of the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictments. The talks had been set to discuss the second agenda item, which covers comprehensive solutions to social inequities. LRA negotiators also protested the arrival of two maimed LRA victims at the talks. Earlier, Gulu District Chairman Norbert Mao had told Embassy Officials that he brought the victims -- one missing a hand and the other missing her lips -- because they had a message of reconciliation that he thought would encourage the peace process.

POWERS